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ABSTRACT

This study of 360 multiply handicapped clients of the North Carolina State Commission for the Blind was taken from a three year project (1969-1972), and is an exploratory attempt to assess the self-concepts and adjustments in and to a self-anchoring technique. From the theoretical and methodological perspectives, the study showed the possibility of utilizing a self-anchoring technique with this kind of sample. The study attempted to develop prototypes of self-concept, and it was thought that the statements multiply handicapped persons made about how they viewed their world indicated a preponderance of interpersonal orientations. The qualitative aspects of the technique were looked at in regard to prototypes of self-image: Sociability, Personality attributes, Religiosity, and Morality. Such orientations toward self-concept were thought to have implications for individual adjustment in, and to, the community, and self-concept and adjustment were believed to influence each other. (Author)

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UTILIZING A SELF-ANCHORING TECHNIQUE FOR ASSESSING SELF-CONCEPT

ABSTRACT

This study of 360 multipli-handicapped clients of the North Carolina State Commission for the Blind was taken from a three year project (1969-1972), and is an exploratory attempt to assess the self-concepts and adjustments in and to their communities of these exceptional persons, utilizing a self-anchoring technique.

From the theoretical and methodological perspectives, the study showed the possibility of utilizing a self-anchoring technique with this kind of sample. The study attempted to develop prototypes of self-concept, and it was thought that the statements multipli-handicapped persons made about how they viewed their world indicated a preponderance of interpersonal orientations.

The qualitative aspects of the technique were looked at in regard to prototypes of self-image: Sociability, Personality Attributes, Religiosity, and Morality. Such orientations toward self-concept were thought to have implications for individual adjustment in, and to, the community, and self-concept and adjustment were believed to influence each other.

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The literature on sensory impairment suggests that our society assigns a deviant role to a multipli-handicapped person, which can be seen as similar to that ascribed to a mental patient or a criminal. In the case of the visually impaired, the difference is that they cannot usually regain full conformity (i.e., sight) while the criminal or mental patient may regain full conformity by simply allowing society's institutions to control his behavior.

In this study the major purpose was to explore the possibility of utilizing a self-anchoring technique (Kilpatrick and Cantril, 1960) with persons who were legally blind, as well as many who were multipli-handicapped (North Carolina State Commission for the Blind, 1970). It was noted at the outset of the study that the randomly selected sample of persons from which the data were derived was possibly lacking in representativeness. A factor responsible for this may be that medical doctors, who examine visually impaired persons initially, may not report to the Commission for the Blind every instance of blindness they find. Another possible factor is that blind persons with independent incomes may not be on the Commission's

register because they have no need of free services, while the poor and unemployed need such services.

In defining the self-concepts of the 360 persons in this sample, who were interviewed in a clinical setting (as opposed to those who were interviewed in a field setting, i.e., in their homes or places of work), prototypes of self-concept, as it related to individual adjustment in and to the community, were generated, as can be seen in Figure 1. These prototypes, or self-defined dimensions of self-concept, that resulted from content analyses of clients' verbatim responses to the self-anchoring scale were: Sociability, Personality Attributes, Religiosity, and Morality. (NOTE: Please insert Figure 1 about here.)

The Theoretical Paradigm

The theoretical schema for this research was derived from symbolic interactionism. The social psychology of G.H. Mead, C.H. Cooley, and W.I. Thomas is the theoretical basis for operationalizing an open-ended interviewing situation, with the purpose of quantifying the data that were produced, in regard to the paradigm.

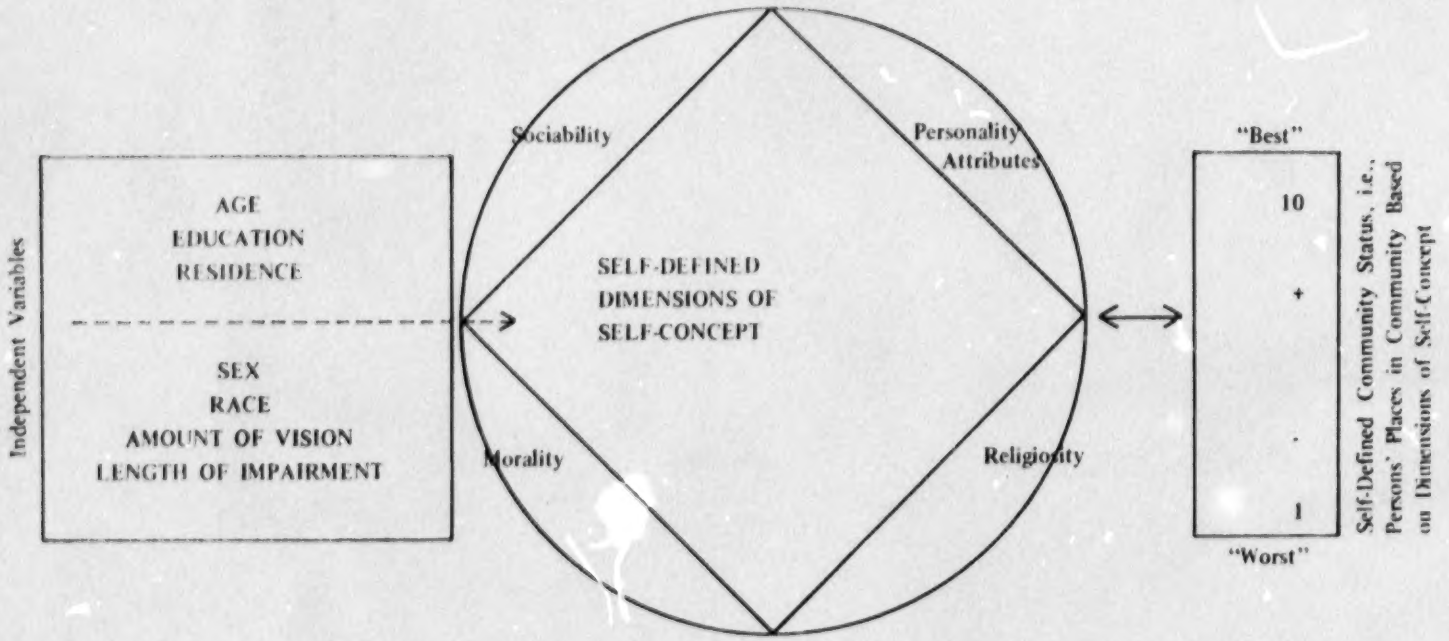

Figure 1. The theoretical paradigm for the relationship between self-concept, prototypes of self-concept, socio-demographic variables and individual community adjustment

Elements of the works of William James (1892), Charles Horton Cooley (1902), George Herbert Mead (1934), W.I. Thomas (1923), Erik H. Erikson (1950; 1959), Robert K. Merton (1957), Harry Stack Sullivan (1953; 1964), and Ronald D. Laing (1961; 1965; 1967) were also examined.

The conceptual schema for this study took the form of a model that related socio-demographic variables, mediated by prototypes of self-concept, to positively or negatively oriented adjustment in and to the community (where a high score on the self-anchoring scale equals positive and a low score equals negative). The conceptual schema, then, involved quantifying the social and psychological adjustment of the multipli-handicapped--as they saw it happening now--whether or not their conceptions were based in reality.

Both the conceptual schema and the theoretical schema had two purposes: one was to provide a basis for the future developing and testing of hypotheses relating demographic variables to community adjustment, via self-concept; another was to provide a rationale for developing and amplifying categories that reflected a consensually validated means of rating self-concept responses relating to individual adjustment in the

community. At the theoretical level, ideas of an interdisciplinary nature emerged, and, therefore, works from several disciplines had to be utilized in order for the factors which affect individual adjustment in the community to be clearly understood.

Figure 1 also denotes that the prototypes, or self-defined dimensions of self-concept, are thought of as intervening variables and are believed to not only affect the individual's perception of the world around him, but also the perception of himself. Therefore, there are double-pointed arrows showing the two-directional effect of self-concept prototypes.

The Sample

Some selection factors of the sample have been noted above; another is the area rehabilitation counselors, who were responsible for finding and providing clients for the North Carolina State Commission for the Blind. It has been suggested (Rawls and Rawls, 1968) that these counselors may tend to pick clients that are most suitable for services, e.g., medical and psychiatric diagnoses, psychological and social work services, and work

adjustment programs. Because of possible bias in primary selection procedures, it may be stated that the sample for this study consisted of a limited variety of blind and multipli-handicapped clients, who were not necessarily representative of any other segment of the blind population in North Carolina.

The sample utilized in this work totals 356, originally 360, but four of the responses on the self-anchoring scale were "don't know" for both the best and the worst categories, and were thus deleted from the content analyses. Of these, 286 were adults and 74 were high school students and other adolescents.

The Self-Anchoring Technique

This technique provided both quantitative and qualitative self-concept data, and the qualitative data became the "protocols" for the content analyses, described below. The technique allowed each respondent to describe, in terms of his own perceptions and values, the top and the bottom--the anchoring points--of the dimensions to be measured. Thus, clients described the best kind of person they could think of and the worst kind of person, e.g., some of the major personality and character traits.

After describing these persons, and in so doing forming the anchoring points, respondents placed themselves on a self-defined continuum of steps, numbered consecutively from bottom to top. These procedures produced ideas concerning self-concepts of the clients, here and now, which helped to indicate the extent of social and psychological adjustment clients saw themselves making.

The self-anchoring technique was considered to be, by its authors (Kilpatrick and Cantril, 1960), an attempt to apply the first-person approach to the measurement of social-psychological variables (1960: 1-2). The question of comparability of data from person to person, or group to group, was spoken to by Kilpatrick and Cantril, and they took the position that the quantitative data might be meaningfully compared numerically (1960: 4). For the qualitative data that this paper is concerned with, pretests to determine meaningful categories into which to place verbalized statements were performed, and analyses of the reliability of the final coding procedure were done.

It was thought, at this stage of the research, that the data elicited from the multipli-handicapped persons in the sample were of the nature of unique perceptions of clients' self-images, and were true

indicators of them, in relation to the conceptual schema and the theoretical schema of the study.

The Pretests

Pretests were initiated with the idea in mind of generating many categories, or prototypes, of self-concept, from clients' self-anchoring data. Originally, it was felt that the categories interpersonal, economic, moral, aesthetic, miscellaneous, and other would account for much of the information; however, pretests were decided on to see if a larger number of more detailed categories might be arrived at, with the possibility of condensing them at a later time.

On the first pretest, two experienced interviewers (that is, experienced in administering the schedule of which the self-anchoring scale was a part) attempted to place the clients' statements into the interpersonal, economic, moral, aesthetic, miscellaneous, and other categories, which were the writer's idea. Rater 1 analyzed 346 best and 346 worst statements, distributing them thusly: interpersonal, 74.6 per cent; economic, 3.0 per cent, moral, 19.4 per cent, aesthetic, 2.4 per cent, and miscellaneous, 0.6 per cent, for the best statements. For the worst statements, interpersonal received 70.7 per cent, economic, 1.6 per cent, moral, 26.6 per cent, aesthet-

ic, 0.4 per cent, and miscellaneous, 0.6 per cent.

Rater 2 analyzed the same number of best and worst statements (346) and placed the best ones thusly: interpersonal, 67.5 per cent, economic, 4.5 per cent, moral 13.8 per cent, aesthetic, 6.0 per cent, miscellaneous, 1.5 per cent, and for the other category, which was labeled "idealized person," 6.7 per cent; for the worst data, interpersonal received 69.2 per cent, economic, 1.4 per cent, moral, 23.4 per cent, aesthetic, 1.1 per cent, miscellaneous, 0.7 per cent, and idealized person, 4.2 per cent. The last category rater 2 developed for best statements, idealized person, was incorporated in the final content analyses as model person.

At this stage of the research, it was decided to attempt an expansion of the number of categories, especially the interpersonal one. The moral category, it was decided, might be looked at from both the religious and moral perspectives. As it turned out in the second pretest using four raters, both religion and morality were mentioned, but in no detailed way.

The second pretest produced several new categories, religion being one of them, using 356 best and 356 worst statements. Many of the new categories produced, however, were not heavily tallied, for example,

"race," 0.3 per cent by rater 3 only on best and none or worst; another is "handicap" 1.1 per cent on the worst statements only by rater 3.

The major finding of the second pretest, then, was that the heavily tallied categories were those already specified in the first pretest, and indeed, before any pretests were performed. For instance, rater 5 placed 55.6 per cent of the best statements in an "interpersonal" category, and 33.1 per cent of the worst statements in the same category, i.e., interpersonal. Rater 6 placed 16.0 per cent of the best statements in a new "religious" category, and 18.8 per cent of the worst ones in that category.

It should be pointed out that while the two raters of the first pretest were given the categories to place the self-anchoring statements into (except for other), the four raters of the second pretest were not given any information at all. Thus, the second pretest employed named categories which resulted in a wider distribution of tallies.

On the bases of these pretests, the final prototypes of self-defined dimensions of self-concept were chosen by the writer. Rater 5, for example,

produced a personal-individual traits category into which 19.9 per cent of the best statements were placed, and 31.7 per cent of the worst statements. Rater 6 distinguished between friendliness (15.7 per cent of the best and 13.8 per cent of the worst) and other personality traits, that were spread out over four more categories.

The Prototypes

The rationale, then, for utilizing the prototypes sociability, personality attributes, religiosity, morality, model person, and other was the results of the two pretests described above. The categories model person and other received very little play in the final content analyses, and were not included in the paradigm (Figure 1).

It might be interesting to note that the prototypes might be considered orientations toward an individual's adjustment in and to the community, and that the evidence indicated this to be true, although the responses clients made were not, in most cases, polar opposites. While a client might have said that the best kind of person should be religious, he also might have said that the worst kind of person was lacking in moral character. Examples from the data are

listed below.

It was thought that the self-anchoring statements utilized in the study manifested a set of homogeneous responses; the responses were meaningfully categorized in relation to the prototypes. It was further thought that the prototypes encompassed ways of viewing one's world, which had bearing upon social-psychological adjustment, and in relation to the theoretical schema and its conceptual counterpart. These prototypes were representative of the consensus of opinion of the six raters on two separate pretests. It was thought that the four basic categories, that were used as a basis for the final content analyses, took into account most of the thoughts the multipli-handicapped respondents expressed about their world.

The six prototypes might be described most efficiently by giving examples of them--picked from actual responses of clients:

1. Sociability: "Love for everyone; treat people nice; respect others; person who knows how to talk to others." (Best Statement, Interview #116.) "Rough; hating; couldn't talk to them; someone who would pass you by if you needed help." (Worst Statement, Interview #116.)

2. Personality Attributes: "Personality; looks; features about him; actions." (Best Statement, Interview #57.) "Not friendly; sarcastic; don't care how they act, dress." (Worst Statement, Interview #57.)

3. Religiosity: "A Christian; do good things; being nice to everyone else." (Best Statement, Interview #290.) "Being mean to everybody they see; saying bad words when older people are around; stealing; breaking the law." (Worst Statement, Interview #290.)

4. Morality: "Somebody who didn't commit any crimes; use any bad language; free-hearted; overall generous." (Best Statement, Interview #276.) "Some of those criminals on the street; mean; fights and in trouble all the time." (Worst Statement, Interview #276.)

5. Model Person: "The way they act--good and all." (Best Statement, Interview #166.) "The way they done--the way they didn't act good or nice." (Worst Statement, Interview #166.)

6. Other: "Don't know." (Best Statement, Interview #92.) "Don't know." (Worst Statement, Interview #92.)

The Final Content Analyses

As W. I. Thomas (1923) suggested fifty years ago,

how people define their situations determines their adjustment. In this study, the meaning to the clients of their verbalized self-concepts was assessed through the methodological procedure of content analysis (Duverger, 1966) of the entire responses of the multipli-handicapped clients. Much discussion of the procedure was done before the analyses were undertaken.

The final content analysis was performed by five raters. In preparation for this, individual slips of paper with entire statements on them were prepared, taking into consideration the suggestion that the best and the worst statements from the same client should be analyzed separately. Code sheets were prepared for the five raters, and organized in such a way that each interview number, for each interview utilized, corresponded to the data--the best and the worst responses. The raters performed the content analysis as a group, under the same external conditions. As a group, the raters were given instruction sheets which explained exactly what they had to do; in a few instances, data were missing or a number was out of place, and such problems were promptly rectified. A sixth rater scheduled to do the analysis began it, but never completed it, and it was not included here.

Reliability Measures

It was necessary to determine the degree of reliability among raters for each item in the content analysis. As a nominal level of measurement was involved, an item analysis determined the proportion of raters who agreed on the classification of a particular self-anchoring statement. It was decided that no less than .60 was acceptable as a measure of interrater reliability per statement.

While none of the reliability measures (shown in the results section below) for any of the heavily tallied prototypes was extremely high, the coefficients for the prototypes into which most of the cases fell--sociability, personality attributes, religiosity, and morality--were sufficiently high for possible future utilizing as bases for hypotheses testing, in regard to the theoretical schema and the conceptual schema.

It was thought that the consensually validated prototypes made the analyses both reliable and valid. Face validity was assumed as the prototypes were seen as defining themselves. Therefore, the measurements obtained were valid in relation to consensually validated definitions of the prototypes that were used (Duverger, 1966: 122-123).

Results

It has been stated that in this exploratory study the attempt was made to analyze, to conceptualize, and to abstract for scientific speculation the results of data that ~~was~~ were produced by a self-anchoring technique. These data emerged in a clinical situation, from persons that were multiply handicapped, usually with medical disabilities. By using a self-anchoring technique, one's values in relation to others in one's world were assessed. These verbalized concepts might be looked at as abstractions which could become real if they operated effectively in concrete situations (Cantril, 1965: 14).

In the following Table, the number, percentage, and reliability coefficients for the six prototypes are listed.

(NOTE: Please insert Table 1 about here; its on the next page.)

Conclusions

From the symbolic interactionist perspective, unique self-concepts are considered to be social-psychological indicators of an individual's adjustment in and to the community. A conceptual schema was developed in which to view an operational definition of adjustment in and to the community. It was

TABLE 1

The Number, Percentage, and Reliability Coefficients for the Six Prototypes of the Final Content Analyses[a]

	Best Statements			Worst Statements		
Prototypes	No.	%	Coeff-icient	No.	%	Coeff-icient
Sociability	74	20.78	.77	80	22.47	.74
Personality Attributes	189	53.08	.79	199	55.90	.77
Religiosity	40	11.24	.82	36	10.11	.60
Morality	29	8.84	.60	33	9.27	.62
Model Person	12	3.03	.82	6	1.69	.73
Other (Misc.)	12	3.03	.60	2	0.56	.90
Total	356	100.00		356	100.00	

a There were originally 360 persons in the sample, but four (4) of the responses could not be categorized.

thought that socio-demographic variables might affect self-concepts (as described by the prototypes) and that positively oriented or negatively oriented self-concepts were indicators of positive or negative individual adjustment in and to the community.

From a sociological methodology point of view, it is important that this study indicated the possibility of assessing the self-perceptions of the multipli-handicapped, through the use of a self-anchoring technique. By developing prototypes of self-image, through content analysis of verbalized statements, future hypotheses testing may result in information valuable to persons interested in helping the medically disabled. It seems that blind and multipli-handicapped persons view interpersonal orientations to their world as important, e.g., sociability and personality aspects of human interaction.

It was noted from Table 1 that the reliability measures for the content analyses were not high, but those for the worst ratings were consistently lower than for the best ratings. This might be interpreted to mean that concepts of what constituted the "worst kind" of person were less clear in clients' minds than were concepts of the "best kind" of person. An explanation for this might be

that society's ameliorative organizations make it quite clear to their clients what is expected of "good" (equals best) people; but ameliorative organizations do not spend much effort in defining "bad" (equals worst) people as a separate and perhaps justifiably appropriate category.

Another emerging indication of the social isolation of the blind and multipli-handicapped concerned the responses they made to the self-anchoring questions. In the first pretest, it will be remembered that over 70 per cent of the best and the worst statements were placed in the predetermined interpersonal category. That category was split into the sociability and personality attributes categories for the final analyses. These results seem to indicate a strong need to pursue interpersonal experiences. Yet, it was indicated that these medically exceptional people were not often admitted to extensive social interaction with persons not similarly afflicted. (Goffman, 1963; Rawls and Rawls, 1968; Scott, 1969).

This study was conducted with existing ameliorative agencies in mind, with the desire to amplify knowledge about the multipli-handicapped, which might be pertinent to those who wish to help them. An interpretative view of the qualitative data may

also be indicated, keeping the clients in mind. Improvements in the life styles of these individuals has been the stated aim of social agencies, but self-criticism often has been associated with social change. It is probable that a social-psychologically based approach to assessing the self-concepts of the multipli-handicapped is well-suited to the problem, but it is also possible that new ideas may improve any treatment approach. An example of such a new idea is the use of sight and sound equipment in an interview situation. Video and audio tape recordings of live interviews may add much insight, in future research, to the assessment of self-feelings. The coordination of information from several media may add much knowledge about the self-images of the multipli-handicapped, and, in turn shed light upon the proper assessment of their adjustment in and to their communities.

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Footnote

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